

## Deliver Me, O LORD

There are a number of passages of scripture that give us instruction and encouragement when we're facing what has often been called "the storms of life." This is a phrase that, generally speaking, addresses the suffering and trials that we face simply because we live in a fallen world. This can include suffering connected to our physical health; or times when our car breaks down and we don't have enough money to get it fixed. It can include those days when everything that could go wrong *does go wrong*. This type of suffering happens to those directly affected by natural disasters such as floods, famine, tornadoes, etc. The point is this: Although God can *never truly* be taken out of the equation, these are examples of things that will happen to *both Christians and non-Christians* in a world after the fall into sin.

Psalm 140, which we'll be looking at in this new series, addresses suffering—but a *particular kind* of suffering. This Psalm gives us an example of suffering that can happen to Christians—not just in a general way—but because of seeking to stand for God, his kingdom, his Word and his ways. They suffer at the hands of wicked people who want *their way* and who are willing to do *almost anything* to silence those who they perceive are in the way of what they want. Let's begin this Psalm by looking at:

—Prayer against Enemy Plots

This Psalm begins with a prayer from David: "Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men." Throughout the Psalm, we're given depictions of conflict between the "wicked" (vs. 4, 8) and the "righteous" (vs. 13). It's filled with images of the ways in which the wicked will seek to harm the righteous. Notice that the evil intent of the wicked man toward righteous David begins in the heart. They, "plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually." (vs. 2) Their plots of wickedness move from the inside of the heart and mind to the outside with the slanderous and harmful words that they say. "They make (whet) their tongue sharp as a serpent's and under their lips is the venom of asps." (vs. 3) The language that David uses is *intentional* language.

The first phrase of verse 3 speaks of being very *intentional* in taking the time needed to prepare to harm someone. It can remind us of someone who uses a "whet stone" to slowly and systematically work on the blade of a knife to make it razor sharp so that it *cuts deep* and therefore does the most damage. "...under their lips are the venom of asps (*poison of vipers or snakes*)." Their words are intentionally chosen for the purpose of doing great injury—physically, spiritually, emotionally and even materially, if possible. Next, we see the *intentional* "planning" to cause someone to physically trip

and fall (vs. 4). This is not just a moment of careless or unthinking words. This is a well thought out plan to inflict the greatest amount of pain. Notice also the motivation of these wicked people; their "pride" is *ruling* their thinking and acting. "The *arrogant (or prideful)* have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net.....they have set snares for me." (vs. 5)

The Psalms—among many other things—teach us much about the wickedness of mankind after the Fall of Adam. These wicked people are driven by their malicious craving to stand against the kingdom of God, God's Word and God's people. How do we see this type of open opposition to Christians in our world today? Let me note first of all that this can happen in a number of different ways and it's not confined to adults only. Young people who want to stand for God may be mistreated and made fun of at school or with their peers that they try to befriend. It can happen at our jobs and in other relationships and sadly, even relationships with family members. Although this suffering will happen, Christians must, *graciously*, take a stand for Christ everywhere that God places us. It's important that Christians are seen as standing for what's right and desiring justice for those who are mistreated.

One of the ways in which the weak and those in desperate need receive help is through our legal system. But, sadly, in America and in many other countries, the legal system is not always just. One Christian author has noted that, "Laws are increasingly based on what is perceived to be *public opinion* or in step with the (so called) 'right side of history.'" Christians, like King David, may increasingly find ourselves crying out in our prayers: "Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men."

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